

Wellesley reached Talavera, seventy miles south-west of Madrid, in July 1809. Here he experienced supply difficulties and was faced with the advance of two French armies converging from north and south, commanded respectively by Marshals Soult and Victor. Victor arrived in the area first and, without waiting for Soult to come up, attacked on 28 July with 30,000 men. The Spaniards took little part in the battle, and the bulk of the fighting was done by 16,000 British troops, who finally threw back Victor, inflicting on him losses of 7,300 men in casualties and prisoners and twenty guns. The British lost some 6,000 casualties, but Wellesley was able to withdraw into Portugal before Soult appeared. For this victory he was created Viscount Wellington.

Tanagra (First Peloponnesian War), 457 BC

Alarmed by a crushing Athenian naval victory over Aegina, Sparta re-established the Boeotian League under Thebes to curb further Athenian aggression. In 457 BC at Tanagra, fourteen miles east of Thebes, supported by allied troops the Spartans met a force of 14,000 Athenians assisted by Thessalian cavalry. Both sides suffered heavy casualties, but desertion of the Thessalians gave the Spartans victory. Their losses, however, forced them to return home, and shortly afterwards the Athenians defeated the Thebans to restore their control over central Greece.

Tannenberg I (Rise of Poland), 1410

At the start of the fifteenth century Teutonic Knights ruled over much of north and east Germany from their capital at Marienburg (Malbork), twenty miles south of the Gulf of Danzig. In 1410 they were challenged by a Polish force under Ladislas V, aided by Bohemian mercenaries under Jan Žižka and many Russians and Lithuanians, at Tannenberg, then in north-east Poland. On 15 July the Knights were overwhelmed with heavy loss, and they never recovered either their former glory or power.

Tannenberg II (First World War), 1914

Thrusting into East Prussia against the German Eighth Army of 160,000 men, and belying the German estimates that no major

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advance could occur for six weeks, the Russian First (General Rennenkampf) and Second (General Samsonov) Armies allowed themselves to become separated by the fifty-mile-long complex of lakes and wooded country known as the Masurian Lakes. When General von Hindenburg, with his Chief of Staff General Ludendorff, arrived to take over command of the Germans after the Battle of Gumbinnen, he approved a plan devised by Colonel Hoffman to exploit this weakness. Accordingly, making use of their interior lines of communication and further assisted by a good railway system, von Hindenburg transferred three complete corps from the area of Königsberg, which was evidently Rennenkampf's sole objective, to meet Samsonov in the south. The Russians were unaware of this redeployment, but the Germans knew of Russian intentions through their habit of sending uncoded messages by wireless. Samsonov continued to press forward, partly in search of supplies as his commissariat arrangements had broken down, and preliminary action took place on 27 August 1914. Next day some 350,000 troops were engaged in battle near the village of Tannenberg, south-west of the Masurian Lakes, as the three German corps gradually drove in the flanks of the Russian salient in a double envelopment. Such was the Russian confusion that some troops continued to advance unaware of Samsonov's order to retire, and by 31 August the Second Army had ceased to exist: 30,000 had become casualties, 92,000 were prisoners, Samsonov had committed suicide and possibly as few as 40,000 men escaped. German casualties were some 13,000, and von Hindenburg could turn his attention to Rennenkampf, who had made no move to assist his fellow commander, knowing that the Russians now exercised no real threat to East Prussia. This psychological and physical disaster for the Russians meant that German fears of simultaneous campaigns on two fronts receded.

Taormina (*Saracen Conquest of Sicily*), 902

Early in the ninth century Moslems from North Africa invaded Sicily and began slowly to overrun the island. Syracuse fell, although the Byzantine garrison of Taormina on the east coast, between Messina and Catania, close to Mount Etna, continued to hold out. In 902 a new Saracen assault at length captured the city,